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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cross-cultural program helps to build bridges with Turkey, provides study-abroad opportunities

*Chairman Shingoitewa commends Dr. Gilbert for helping to promote a program that
will encourage study-abroad opportunities for Native American students*

KYKOTSMOVI, Ariz. – A program intended to build bridges and provide educational opportunities for Hopi students is leading to more cross cultural exchanges between the Hopi Tribe, the Turkish Coalition of America and the country of Turkey.

A news article dated July 23 titled, "TCA promotes trade relationship between Turkey and Hopi Tribe" has raised some questions and concern amongst some Hopi tribal members. Although the Turkish newspaper may have misrepresented some information, a relationship between the Hopi Tribe and Turkey is being fostered, thanks to the coordination of the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA).

Dr. Willard Sakiestewa Gilbert, a Hopi professor of bilingual and multicultural education at Northern Arizona University and former president of the National Indian Education Association, helps to facilitate relations between Native American tribes and the TCA to help provide study abroad opportunities for students.

Gilbert refers to the program as a cross-cultural international exchange

According to Gilbert, a group of American Indians, at the invitation of the TCA, the United Negro College Fund Special Programs and the National Congress of American Indian toured several western and central Turkish universities for the purpose of cross-cultural faculty and student exchanges. The goals included providing participants information on unique study abroad opportunities and to promote TCA's "Study Abroad in Turkey Scholarships" for Native American, African American and Hispanic students.

Gilbert explained "opportunities include faculty and student exchanges between Turkish and United States universities, student academic trips to Turkey and the United States and establishing Native American and African American departments at Turkish universities."

"This incredible tour generated great interest and dialogue between Turkish and Native American educators and policymakers for future faculty and student cross-cultural exchanges that will benefit our Native people as we build bridges between American Minority Serving Institutions and Turkish universities," Gilbert stated. "These cross-cultural educational opportunities will provide Native students an occasion to gain international perspectives to bring back to their communities."

Shortly after the tour, Dr. Gilbert met with staff from the Hopi Chairman's Office and the Hopi Department of Education and their Director Noreen Sakiestewa to talk about the possibility of providing Hopi scholarships and to generate interest among Hopi students, graduate and under-graduates, to study in Turkey.

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Hopi Tribal Chairman LeRoy N. Shingoitewa commended Dr. Gilbert for helping to promote a program that will encourage study-abroad opportunities for Native American students. The Chairman's Office is also interested in other opportunities with Turkey as well.

On Nov. 1, Chairman Shingoitewa sent a letter to Zafer Caglayan, the State Minister for Foreign Trade for the Republic of Turkey, inviting him to Hopiland for a visit to establish a working relationship between the Hopi Tribe and Turkey.

"I cordially invite Mr. Caglayan to better acquaint himself with our land, culture and people," Shingoitewa said. "We wish to further discussion, which has been established during a July 20 meeting with the Office of the Chairman regarding specific Hopi development projects that would be of interest to Turkish investors and businesses."

Chairman Shingoitewa explained that the Hopi Reservation occupies more than 1.5 million acres in northeastern Arizona and is home to a wealth of natural resources including vast coal reserves. In 2011, the tribe will conduct a feasibility study to access the advantages of running a new rail line through its land and this is a project the tribe hopes to discuss with Turkish representatives.

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